BOOK REVIEWS

Sabrina P. Ramet / Christine M. Hassenstab / Ola Listhaug, eds, *Building Democracy in the Yugoslav Successor States. Accomplishments, Setbacks, Challenges since 1990*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2017. 472 pp., ISBN 978-1-107-18074-1, £74.99 (Hardback)

This volume is the eighth and final in a series on civic and uncivic values in the post-Yugoslav region, edited between 2006 and 2017 by Sabrina P. Ramet in co-operation with different scholars. The aim of *Building Democracy in the Yugoslav Successor States* (and of the entire series) is to assess the progress of Yugoslav successor states in the building of liberal democracies and to identify, as the title itself suggests, the main accomplishments, setbacks, and challenges thereto since 1990. To this end, the contributors address, to varying extents and from slightly different angles, economic transformation, corruption, the media, gender inequality, and intolerance. The book is in three parts, namely, introduction and theory, country case studies (including a chapter on the autonomous province of Vojvodina), and a conclusion.

In the opening chapter, Sabrina P. Ramet sets the tone of the volume by emphasizing the importance of civic values in the democratization process, linking it to her previous work, most prominently *The Liberal Project and the Transformation of Democracy: The Case of East Central Europe*, published in 2007 by Texas A&M University Press, a copy of which was given to all contributors. A liberal-political culture, the precon-

dition of liberal democracy, Ramet argues, is not formed in a vacuum: 'It is a product of actual conditions in a society, the specific mix of peoples living in the country or migrating to it, and, of course, the active construction, shaping, and promotion of certain values, by the political and economic establishment, through textbooks and schooling, the mass media, literature, films, and — not to be omitted — advertising and mass marketing' (29). The remaining five articles in the first section deal with democratization patterns, (in)tolerance and its consequences, institutional trust, political culture, and the impact of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) on the democratization process. In his chapter, Florian Bieber analyses three drivers of the last: large-scale protests, intra-party transformations, and external pressures and incentives. While dismissing any linearity solely involving progress in the democratization process, he concludes that the region, with the exception of Serbia, has witnessed mostly external and élite-led democratization. When it comes to tolerance, a key aspect of political culture, Zachary T. Irwin's contribution shows it to be strongly correlated with the level of progress in democratic reform and indirectly with the success of the European Union (EU) candidacy. Building trust towards institutions, i.e. establishing relatively well-performing institutions that are not favouring particular groups is an equally important step in the democratization process, analysed by Karin Dyrstad and Ola Listhaug. Andrej Kirbiš and Sergej Flere assert that, based on the major demo-

cratic political culture indicators, the post-Yugoslav group of states became less democratic in the 1995/8-2008 period. Although the mandate of the ICTY ended in 2017, it might be too early to analyse its impact on democratization in the region, which was expected to be a sort of by-product, argue Jovana Mihajlović Trbovc and Vladimir Petrović.

The central part of the book features country studies, where more attention is given to individual transitory patterns marked by corruption, contradictory court verdicts, slow implementation of reforms, and frequent transactional-voting behaviour. The cross-country comparison does not bring big surprises: Slovenia and Croatia seem to fare a little better than the rest, but are not immune to corruption, inconsistencies in the rule of law, or pressures on the media. As Dunja Melčić, Alenka Krašovec, and Sabrina Ramet in their respective chapters show, EU membership has not mitigated religious, ethnic, and patriarchal chauvinism. What characterizes the region, almost indistinctively and regardless of the individual countries' progress in Euro-Atlantic integration, is the lack of political will to implement certain laws, in particular with regard to women and sexual minorities, which is limited to formalistic compliance within the EU-accession process. Jelena Subotić calls building democracy in Serbia a 'one step forward and three steps back' (165) process, which is applicable to the neighbouring countries as well, inasmuch as institutions serve party and corporate interests. Both Jelena Subotić, and Kenneth Morrison in his contribution on Montenegro, attribute it to the structural-political problem of 'state capture' by ruling political parties (176 and 353-354 respectively). Similarly, Sabrina Ramet writes about a symbiosis

between the political and business élites in analysing Macedonia's post-Yugoslav trajectory, while Vladimir Đorđević warns that similar practices in Kosovo might lead to further political and social radicalization. Kurt Bassuener argues that Bosnia's and Herzegovina's prospects will remain grim until there is a shock to the system, greater than the protest in February and the floods in May 2014. He defines politics in the structurally ethnicized Bosnia as a for-profit enterprise, where 'the abuse of public office for private gain is the point' (226). By the same token, minority rights in Vojvodina are often 'hijacked by political interests' (384), dominated by a 'multiculturalism of nationalists' (377), claims Angela Ilić.

Some authors, including Bassuener and Subotić, even question whether Bosnia and Serbia after 2000 are transition cases at all. Christine Hassenstab reiterates the query in the conclusion, when inviting the reader to reflect on the depth of reforms, the reasons for a limited implementation of particular laws, and the lack of inclusion of tolerance in the political landscape of these countries.

Overall, the multiple contributions to this volume form a coherent whole, but each of the chapters can be easily read independently. To an attentive observer of the Yugoslav successor states, this book should not appear as a source of substantial novelty. Nevertheless, it updates previous studies of democracy building and, as such, it is of potential interest to readers wanting to acquaint themselves with the most recent analyses of the region's democratization process. However, judging by the state of affairs in the Yugoslav successor states and the difficulties in defining and delimiting transition, more contributions on the topic will follow.

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